

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

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SUBJECT: UPDATE OF PRESS COVERAGE OF AIRLINE LICENSING CONTROVERSY

REF A) BTN 586 (B) BTN 592 (C) BTN 593

1. MARCH 31 ADVOCATE NEWS GAVE FRONT PAGE TREATMENT TO THREE STORIES CONCERNING THE LICENSE LIMITATION MATTER. MOST PROMINENT, CARRYING HEAD "BARROW DEPLORES ENVOY'S ATTITUDE - BARBADOS NOT DEPENDENT ON US", DEALT WITH THE PRIME MINISTER'S MARCH 29 TELEVISED PRESS CONFERENCE DURING WHICH HE STRONGLY CRITICIZED THE AMBASSADOR'S PUBLICIZED REMARKS ON THE AIR TRANSPORT LICENSING AUTHORITIES ACTION.

EXCERPTS FROM THE STORY: "THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT THE AMBASSADOR'S ATTITUDE WAS ONE THAT PROMOTED THE ATTITUDE OF THE 'UGLY AMERICAN' - THAT BECAUSE 'WE ARE A SMALL COUNTRY THE UNITED STATES BEING A RICH AND POWERFUL COUNTRY, IT CAN COMMIT ALL BREACHES IN INTERNATIONAL LAW AND DICTATE TO SMALL COUNTRIES WHAT THEY SHOULD DO'.

"SAID MR. BARROW: . . . ' I THINK THAT THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THE AIR TRANSPORT LICENSING AUTHORITY WILL INFORM THE UNITED STATES AMBASSADOR ABOUT THE FACTS OF LIFE IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS'.

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".MR BARROW SAID THAT THEY WOULD TELL THE AMBASSADOR IN NO UNCERTAIN TERMS THAT THEY IN BARBADOS DID NOT DEPEND

UPON THE LARGESSE OF THE UNITED STATES.

"HE ADDED: . . . 'IF IN CONTRADISTINCTION TO SOME OF THE PUPPET STATES THEY HAVE IN LATIN AMERICA AND STILL CONTROL AS MILITARY REGIMES, WE WILL NOT HAVE PEOPLE TELLING US THAT WE MUST DO THIS AND MUST DO THAT.'

"ASKED WHAT EFFECT IT WOULD HAVE ON THE ECONOMY IF THE TWO AIRLINES STOP OPERATING THROUOH BARBADOS, THE PRIME MINISTER REPLIED: 'WE HAVE NOT ASKED THEM TO CEASE OPERATING'.

"HE HOPED THAT THE AMBASSADOR ONLY 'HAD A RUSH OF BLOOD TO HIS HEAD' AND WAS NOT ACTING ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM DR. HENRY KISSINGER, UNITED STATES SECRETARY OF STATE."

2. SECOND STORY ("ATLA DENIES ALLEGATIONS") WAS BASED ON A STATEMENT BY THE HEAD OF THE LICENSING AUTHORITY, ROSS WEATHERHEAD, IN WHICH HE DENIED THAT THE AUTHORITY'S ACTION WAS IN RETALIATION FOR THE CAB DECISION, CITING THE DATES OF THE RESPECTIVE ACTIONS AS "PROOF." (COMMENT: WHETHER ATLA'S ACTION WAS TAKEN IN ANTICIPATION OF THE NEGATIVE CAB RULING OR ONLY AFTER INFORMAL WORD OF THE CAB ACTION REACHED BARBADOS IS UNIMPORTANT, THE GOB MOVE WAS OBVIOUSLY AN ATTEMPT TO INFLUENCE THE ICA MATTER.) WEATHERHEAD'S SECOND POINT WAS THAT A THREE MONTH "REGULAR" LICENSE REPRESENTS MORE SECURITY FOR THE CARRIERS THAN PROVISIONAL LICENSES THAT MAY BE CANCELLED ON 24-HOURS NOTICE. WEATHERHEAD CALLED ON THE AMBASSADOR, THE ADVOCATE NEWS' EDITOR AND A LOCAL COLUMNIST TO RETRACT THEIR ACCUSATIONS REGARDING ATLA'S ACTIONS.

3. FINAL STORY MARCH 31, CAPTIONED "NOTE OF PROTEST DELIVERED", QUOTED FROM THE NOTE SENT BY THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AS FOLLOWS: "THE MINISTRY VIEWS THE ALLEGED UTTERANCES WITH GREAT CONCERN AND TAKES STRONG OBJECTION TO THE AMBASSADOR'S USE OF HIS POSITION OF PRIVILEGE TO INTERFERE PUBLICLY IN THE PROPER FUNCTIONS OF A STATUTORY AUTHORITY".

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4. THE FOLLOWING DAY, COVERAGE OF THE LICENSING MATTER, WHILE NO LONGER ON THE FRONT PAGE, CONTINUED WITH OPPOSITON SENATOR BERNARD ST. JOHN'S CRITICISM OF ATLA MADE DURING THE SENATE DEBATE ON THE 1976-77 BUDGET ESTIMATES. THE BARBADOS LABOR PARTY (BLP) SENATOR CHARGED THAT UNLESS ATLA WISHES TO BE CONSIDERED A "PUPPET" IT SHOULD SAY WHY IT SUDDENLY PUT EASTERN ON A LIMITED PERMIT.

5. THE SAME EDITION (APRIL 1) CARRIED A SCATHING AND SARCASTIC EDITORIAL ATTACK ON ATLA'S ATTEMPT TO MAINTAIN THAT ITS

ACTION WAS NOT DESIGNED TO HURT THE US CARRIERS AND ITS DENIAL THAT ACTION AGAINST EAL AND AA HAD ANY RELATION TO THE CAB DECISION ON ICA. EDITOR, CLEARLY STUNG BY ATLA'S CALL FOR HIM TO RETRACT THE POINTS MADE IN HIS MARCH 30 EDITORIAL (REF C) ENDED THIS ONE WITH AN OBLIQUE SWIPE AT WHAT HE TERMED THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT'S PENCHANT FOR KEEPING THE CITIZENRY UNINFORMED.

6. COLUMNIST EDWARD COZIER ("ELC") IN HIS APRIL 2 COLUMN CONTINUED HIS ATTACK ON ATLA, ACCUSING THE AUTHORITY OF TRYING TO CONCEAL THE FACT THEIR ACTIONS AGAINST EAL AND AA WERE LINKED TO THE CAB'S RULING ON ICA.

7. LETTER TO THE EDITOR HAVE ALL BEEN FAVORABLE TO THE AMBASSADOR'S STANCE AND ACTIONS.
BRITTON

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